

REMARKS TO THE PRESS BY SOUTH AFRICAN AMBASSADOR BOTHA FOLLOWING HIS MEETING WITH THE SECRETARY MONDAY, SEPTEMBER 27, 1976.

QUESTION: I mainly just wanted to ask you, is the Rhodesian negotiation process still track or has it been derailed by the events of the weekend?

AMBASSADOR BOTHA: I think it is still on track -- I think so.

QUESTION: What is the basis for your optimism?

AMBASSADOR BOTHA: Well, I've only just now had the opportunity perhaps to learn of the reaction from the Secretary of State of the black African presidents

: You should bear in mind that the Ambassador has been travelling for several hours, making it a rather full day, and hasn't had much opportunity to study any of these issues in detail.

QUESTION: But the Secretary did express to you confidence that there still is maneuvering room for negotiation?

AMBASSADOR BOTHA: I can't discuss the substance of my talk with the Secretary.

QUESTION: Mr. Ambassador, were you as optimistic as the Secretary was in the State Department statement yesterday?

AMBASSADOR BOTHA: I said I just arrived, and I just met with the Secretary now since we last met in South Africa.

QUESTION: There are some, however, who are describing in pessimistic terms the statement by the black African leaders. What is your position?

AMBASSADOR BOTHA: My position is that I must first report to my Prime Minister, now. And I think he will first have to study the reaction and the views of the Secretary of State.

QUESTION: Are we any closer to a timetable for a meeting organized by the British.

AMBASSADOR BOTHA: I cannot discuss this at this moment.

[Light chatter as Ambassador walks to door. Non-substantive question followed by:]

QUESTION: What was the subject of your meeting with Secretary Kissinger this afternoon?

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AMBASSADOR BOTHA: The Secretary informed on his views as to the reaction of the black African presidents. We discussed that and various other matters which have been under discussion, as you know, in South Africa.

QUESTION: Did his explanation fit the position as you understand it with regard to the African [inaudible]?

AMBASSADOR BOTHA: I cannot at this junction go into the discussions. I must now first report to my Government.

QUESTION: Is it South Africa's view that the black African presidents have gone back on this deal in any way.

AMBASSADOR BOTHA: I cannot express a view on this. We must first -- you will understand that I have to report to my Prime Minister now, first of all.

QUESTION: Yes. I just wondered if you hadn't heard before you came here --

QUESTION: Was Mr. Smith [inaudible]

AMBASSADOR BOTHA: It's up to the South African Government to decide this. I cannot express a view on that at this stage.

QUESTION: Was Mr. Smith deceived? Did he get the wrong end of the stick, for whatever reason?

AMBASSADOR BOTHA: Was Mr. Smith deceived? By whom?

QUESTION: Yes, about the terms -- by whomever -- on which negotiations were to take place.

AMBASSADOR BOTHA: I don't want to comment on that.

QUESTION: Was it your understanding, though, that the black Africans had agreed to the structure of an interim government? Was that an agreed part of the package as far as you know?

AMBASSADOR BOTHA: I think we had better wait for events now to come. Really, gentlemen, you must pardon me today. I've just arrived; I spoke with my Prime Minister yesterday; I got instructions; I've just met with the Secretary of State. It is my duty first of all to inform my Government now.

QUESTION: I wonder if you could clear something up for us ON BACKGROUND or OFF THE RECORD or whatever. We were working on the understanding that what Smith said on Friday was in agreement -- these were the proposals that had been put to him. Now

they say that the structure of the government is only Smith's proposal. That leaves us high and dry. Was there no agreement at all?

AMBASSADOR BOTHA: Who said the latter? That the structure of the government was only Smith's proposal? Who said that?

QUESTION: Bill Rogers said it today.

AMBASSADOR BOTHA: Is that how Mr. Rogers characterized --

QUESTION: That's his negotiating proposal. He said it was put to him by Kissinger and he embraced it as his negotiating proposal. It seemed to us that it was given to Smith as "this is a demand that's been put upon you."

AMBASSADOR BOTHA: I stick with what Mr. Rogers [inaudible] --

QUESTION: Well, that's what we're stuck with, because we'd been lead to believe that that was a demand that had been put to him that he was sort of forced to swallow -- that was not what he had chosen. Now we're being told that was not the demand that was put to him. Leaves us high and dry.